

IN CUPID'S NET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"DORA THORN"

CHAPTER II.

When I reached my seventeenth year, my mirror told me that I was not wanting in beauty. I could not, and did not, associate with any of the servants; they had ceased to expect it. I spent most of my time in the library with the piano and books. There, three times a week, old Michael Holt came to give me my lessons; there all my dreams were dreamed; there I shed tears over my lonely, loveless lot; there I hoped for a future that should be brighter than the past.

Should I ever find some one who would love me? Would anyone care for a girl who had not even a name? Would anyone ever disturb the charmed solitude in which I lived? Should I, like some heroine of fiction, go out one fine morning and meet a prince in disguise? How would my fate come to me? What would the future be like? What love was I hardly knew.

One day one of the maid-servants hastily entered my room.

"Gracia," she said, "Mrs. Paterson says you must come out of the room at once and go to hers. Mr. Graham has arrived, and he will not like to find you here."

Away went my romance, my fair dreams vanished; the bitter reality had come back. Mrs. Paterson was right. What business had a girl without a name in that sumptuous library? I would have given worlds to check the hot flush that rose to my face. In silence I laid down my book and left the room.

In the hall, as I crossed it, I met a gentleman—Mr. Graham, I knew. When he saw me he stopped suddenly.

"Why, who are you?" he said. Strange that every one should ask the same question!

I could make only my usual answer: "I am Gracia."

"Gracia," he repeated slowly; and I saw, to my surprise and delight, a look of admiration in his keen eyes. "Are you the young girl supposed to be the late housekeeper's daughter?"

My proud head dropped. What would I have given if I could have said "No!" Before I had time to answer, he added quickly:

"I for my own part, do not believe that you are Mrs. Blencowe's daughter; but who you are is a mystery I cannot solve."

The words delighted me. It was the first time anyone seemed to think it possible that I might not be Mrs. Blencowe's daughter.

"The squire is coming home," Mr. Graham continued hurriedly. "I do not know on which day he will arrive; but it will be some time next week."

"Do you think he will let me remain here," I asked eagerly.

"Does he know that I am here?"

"I cannot answer either question," he replied. "The squire has never mentioned you in any of his letters. I wrote to him when Mrs. Blencowe died, and said that you would stop at Heron's Nest, unless I heard from him to the contrary; but he did not answer that letter."

"What shall I do?" I asked despairingly.

"Do nothing," he replied. Keep out of his sight for a time. I wish I could be here when he comes, but I go to Scotland to-morrow, and shall not be back for some weeks. I have no doubt that he will do something for you."

I felt more puzzled than ever that day as to who I could possibly be. I must be of good birth, I thought, for every thing about me betokened race. But to what family did I belong? Ah, that was a mystery.

There was great excitement in the household when it was known that the master was returning.

Mr. Graham remained only a few hours. The housekeeper had told him about my singing, and he sent for me to ask me to sing to him. I did so. When I had finished my song, he looked at me thoughtfully.

"You need have no fear for the future, Gracia, you have a fortune in your voice. I have heard none more beautiful."

"A fortune!" I repeated dreamily; and then it occurred to me that I had never in my life had a shilling that I could call my own.

He spoke very kindly, telling me that sooner or later something must transpire with regard to my parentage, that I was to take courage, and that he would always be my friend.

Nothing was spoken of now but the coming of the squire. Quite an army of servants suddenly appeared; trim housemaids, cooks, footmen, coachmen, and grooms, all seemed to spring into existence at once. The staterooms in the great mansion were thrown open, the picture-gallery was set in order.

There I saw the portrait of the squire when he was quite a young man; and my wonder was that the Lady Millicent Branscombe could have resisted him, he looked so gallant and handsome. I loved his face, and when I looked at it I said to myself that the owner of it could never be cruel to me. There was a smile in the bonny blue eyes that promised well; but the picture had been painted before he saw the Lady Millicent.

Within three days after the announcement of the squire's return, Heron's Nest was quite another place. It seemed to me a fitting abode for a prince. Now there was less room than ever for me. I could not mix with the crowd of servants in the hall; my feeling and instinct were against it. Into the renovated rooms I dared not enter. My favorite place, the library, was closed against me. My own little sleeping room at the top of the house, whence I caught a glimpse of the sea, was my only refuge, and during the next week I lived almost entirely there.

At last I heard that the squire had come. I had pictured him always as he was in the portrait—smiling and handsome, but I had failed to allow for the havoc that years of sorrow and pain make.

It seems that for some days no one mentioned me to the master of the house, nor did he make any inquiries about me.

One night, when I believed the whole household to be asleep, I went quietly down to the library to get a book, one of Richard Proctor's called "Other Worlds than Ours"—a book in which I reveled. There was no one there. I found my volume, and went back to my room with it; but a bow of pink ribbon fell unperceived from my hair. As the squire passed through the room early he saw it lying on the carpet, and picked it up. Just at that moment one of the housemaids entered the room.

"To whom does this belong?" the squire asked her.

"To Gracia," answered the maid.

She told me of the meeting afterward, and said that when the squire heard the name he recoiled as though he had received a blow.

"Whom?" he cried, in a loud voice.

And the maid repeated.

"Gracia."

"Send the housekeeper to me," said the squire, after pacing moodily for some minutes up and down the room.

Mrs. Paterson hastened to him, uncertain whether she was to hear praise or blame. The squire, when she entered the library, was standing before the great bay-window. He turned to her abruptly.

"I understand you have a young person named Gracia here. Who is she?"

"No one knows, sir," was the reply. "I found her here when I came, and she is here still."

"How did she come here?" was the next question.

"I cannot tell, sir. I have heard the servants say that the late housekeeper was called away suddenly, that she was absent some time, and returned with the child. I do not think any one in the house knows who she is."

A look of relief passed over the squire's face.

"But that is improbable—impossible, I may say! Some one must know!" he exclaimed.

"To begin with, sir, I do not," returned the housekeeper, with a dignified air.

"As Gracia had been in charge of the former housekeeper, I took her under my protection. Mr. Graham said he was sure that you would not like her to be taken to an orphanage or a workhouse. No one owned her, though we all believed her to be Mrs. Blencowe's daughter."

She paused for a moment, while the squire paced up and down the room angrily. At length he came to a stand-still, and said abruptly:

"Send to me all the servants in the house."

So the butler, the head-gardener, all of the old servants who were at Heron's Nest before I came, were called before the squire but not one amongst them knew anything more than that Mrs. Blencowe, after being absent for some time, had returned with me; but whence she had brought me no one could tell.

Was it anger or relief on the squire's face when they were dismissed, and he stood thinking so deeply? At last he rang the bell and, when one of the footmen answered it, he said:

"Tell Mrs. Paterson to send the young person Gracia to me."

Mrs. Paterson brought me the message herself.

"Go, Gracia," she said, "and do not be afraid. Let the squire hear you sing, and he will put you in the way of making a fortune I am sure."

But I went in fear and trembling to the library, where the squire awaited me. I found myself in the presence of a tall, stately gentleman, whose hair was white as snow, and whose face, though marked by lines of terrible pain, was still handsome, with the fire of his blue eyes undimmed. But they were no longer laughing eyes; they were stern, hard and cold, not at all like the eyes of the portrait. What was it that flashed into them when they fell upon me? I could not tell.

Was it surprise, fear, love, or what? I know not; but it was a look such as I have never seen on any human face since.

We stood motionless for a while, each looking steadily at the other; then he started, sighed deeply, and shuddered. He came a step nearer to me, then drew back; finally he bade me approach him. He looked into my eyes as though he would read my soul, and then said slowly:

"So you are Gracia?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Nothing more?"

"I had to pause, my heart was beating so fast. I wondered what was stealing over me. My eyes filled with tears; the sound of his voice seemed to stir the depths of my soul."

"I thought," he said slowly, "that Gracia was a child."

"I was a child not long since," I answered; "now I am growing up—yet helpless as when I was a child."

"And who are you?" he asked.

Always that same cruel question! I raised my eyes, blinded as they were by tears to his face. "I do not know I answered."

"No one knows who I am. The happy birds have a home; but I have none."

"Heron's Nest has been a home—has it not?" he asked gently.

"No one can have a home who has neither friend nor name," I returned bitterly.

"And you—?"

"Have neither," I interrupted. He looked at me for some moments in silence, then asked:

"How old are you, Gracia?"

"Seventeen," I replied.

"Tell me," he said hesitatingly, "what you remember of your past before you came here."

"It is so little that it is hardly worth telling," I answered. "I remember first being near the sea, in a land where roses grew even to the water's edge; and I can recall a face that used to bend over mine."

I saw the color leave his lips.

"Nothing more," he asked sharply.

"Then I recollect high gray walls—convent walls I know they were, because I remember the sisters' faces—a stormy passage across the sea, and my arrival here. It was only when I reached Heron's Nest that I really seemed to come to life."

"Did Mrs. Blencowe know your history?" he asked suspiciously.

"I believe not."

"She let fall no hint which might have proved a clue to your parents?"

"No," I replied. "I might have dropped from the clouds for all that any one seems to know about me."

He murmured something that I could not hear distinctly, but it sounded like "Poor child!"

"Does it not strike you as a very strange thing that I should return home and find in my house a young lady—how that delighted me—who has been living here for years, and of whom no one knows anything?"

"I do think it strange; and, what is more, I think it cruel," I answered. "I must have had parents, like other people. It is to Heaven they must answer for their neglect of me."

He was still looking at me steadily.

"Do you know," he said, "that you are a very beautiful girl?"

My heart beat with pleasure. No one had ever told me so before, and I knew so little of the outside world that I could hardly tell whether I was beautiful or not.

"Yes," continued the squire, "you are beautiful as—He paused abruptly. "And what education have you had?" he asked.

I gave him a list of my acquisitions, and told him that Michael Holt had taught me all I knew. Long afterward I heard that he had presented Mr. Holt with five hundred pounds, without however assigning any motive for doing so. Then I ventured to say that Mrs. Paterson had wished me to sing to him, adding modestly that I might, with a little assistance, be able to earn my own living.

He smiled. Ah, me, I shall never forget the beauty of that smile. It changed his face altogether.

"We shall see," he said. "Let me hear you sing, Gracia."

He went to the piano, which stood at the other end of the room, and opened it.

"Who taught you music and singing?" he asked.

"The man who has taught me everything else," I answered—"Michael Holt."

On the day before I had found a beautiful little poem, and the words had pleased me so much that I had set them to music. I did not now stop to think whether the verses were suitable or not, but sang them.

"Whose words are those?" the squire asked, when I had finished. I told him.

"And whose music is it?"

And I answered him—oh, so proudly!—that the music was mine.

"Yours?" he questioned, in surprise. "You must be clever! Sing something else that you have set to music."

This time the song was quite different; it was a more lively air. A cry of delight fell from the squire's lips as the last notes died away.

"Excellent!" he exclaimed. "A girl who can compose such music need not despair."

around my lips from the moment I first saw him.

"Squire Dacre," I said, "no one knows anything of me; tell me, do you know who I am?"

I saw that for one moment at least the question paralyzed him; but he soon recovered himself.

"If I could solve the mystery," he returned slowly, "I should not need to ask all the questions I have put to you."

To my mind his evasion of the truth was painful and perceptible. If he had answered me frankly, "Yes," I should not perhaps have dared to ask more. If he had said "No," I should have believed him. As it was, I felt that he had evaded my question. From that moment a strong conviction that the squire knew who I was—knew, in fact, my whole history—took possession of me.

"You hope then, Gracia, to live by your music?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," I answered quietly.

"We will see what can be done. I must think matters over," he said. "You seem to have read a great deal."

I looked around the grand old library with considerable pride.

"Yes," I replied; "I have read most of the books in this room, many of them two or three times."

"We must have a chat about them some day," he said. "I have almost forgotten what books are here—I have been away so many years."

He repeated the final words softly to himself—"So many years!"

From that I gathered that I was not to be driven from Heron's Nest because its master had returned.

"In the meantime, sir, will you tell me what to do?" I asked. "I cannot mix with the servants. Find me a place in your household where I shall not be forced to associate with them?"

His lips quivered.

"I will think over it," he said slowly. Meanwhile be patient, Gracia, be patient. I will see you again."

And that, I knew, was an intimation that I might go. I went; but life was not the same for me again—I felt so sure that the squire knew my whole history.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The only inheritance many receive from their ancestors is impure blood. Fortunately, it is in everyone's power to transmit a cleaner heritage to their posterity by the simple use of Ayer's Sarsaparilla, the only blood-purifier admitted at the Chicago World's Fair.

No Humbug.

Foley's Honey and Tar does not claim to perform miracles. It does not claim to cure all cases of consumption or asthma. But it does claim to give comfort and relief in advanced stages. It is certainly worth trying by those afflicted or threatened with these dread diseases. 50c. B. F. Henry drug-gist.

Bucklen's Arnica Salve.

The best salve in the world for cuts, bruises, sores, ulcers, salt rheum, fever sores, tetter, chapped hands, chilblains, corns, and all skin eruptions, and positively cures piles, or no pay required. It is guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction or money refunded. Price 25c per box. For sale by B. F. Henry's drugstore.

A Valuable Find.

After years of study and labor there has at last been discovered a sure and never failing remedy. It has been tested on patients, who have despaired of ever being cured, the results have been, in every case, wonderful. Groff's Rheumatic Cure is unequaled as a positive remedy in all cases of Chronic and Acute Rheumatism, Gout, Lumbago, Sciatica, Neuralgia, Dysmenorrhea and all kindred affections. It is also a valuable Blood Purifier, being especially useful in Eczema, Psoriasis, Scrofula, all Glandular Enlargements and diseases of the Liver and Kidneys. It is absolutely free from all narcotics. Severe attacks are relieved in from one to three days and a positive cure effected in from five to eighteen days. For sale by Ben F. Henry, Kirksville, Mo.

A cup of muddy coffee is not wholesome, neither is a bottle of muddy medicine. One way to know a reliable and skillfully-prepared blood-purifier is by its freedom from sediment. Ayer's Sarsaparilla is always bright and sparkling, because it is an extract and not a decoction.

All Free.

Those who have used Dr. King's New Discovery know its value, and those who have not, have now the opportunity to try it free. Call on the advertised druggist and get a trial bottle, free. Send your name and address to H. E. Bucklen & Co., Chicago, and get a sample box of Dr. King's New Life Pills Free, as well as a copy of Guide to Health and Household Instructor, free. All of which is guaranteed to do you good and cost you nothing at B. F. Henry's drugstore.

Oil of Blossom.

One bottle cures stomach trouble and constipation. For sale by Smith & Dunkin and McKeehan & Reed. 28-6m.

How to Prevent a Cold.

After an exposure, or when you feel a cold coming on, take a dose of Foley's Honey and Tar. It never fails. 50c. B. F. Henry drug-gist.

Free Pills.

Send your address to H. E. Bucklen & Co., Chicago, and get a free sample box of Dr. King's New Life Pills. A trial will convince you of their merits. These pills are easy in action and are particularly effective in the cure of constipation and sick headache. For Malaria and Liver trouble they have been proved invaluable. They are guaranteed to be free from every deleterious substance and to be purely vegetable. They do not weaken by their action, but by giving tone to the stomach and bowels greatly invigorate the system. Regular size 25c per box. Sold by B. F. Henry, druggist.

Cotton States and International Exposition.

Atlanta, Ga., Sept. 18 to Dec. 31, 1895. The Wabash Railroad has made a special low rate for parties desiring to attend the Cotton States and International Exposition at Atlanta, Ga., which will be open until December 31st, 1895. Tickets are now on sale, good returning until January 7, 1896. Only one change of sleepers from points on the Wabash Line to Atlanta. For detailed information, rates, sleeping car berths, etc., call on or write to nearest ticket agent of the Wabash or connecting lines, or

C. S. CRANE,

G. P. & T. A., St. Louis.

You Can't Afford to Chance it.

A heavy cold may lead to pneumonia or consumption. Foley's Honey and Tar taken in time affords perfect security from serious results. 50c. B. F. Henry drug-gist.

SPECIFIC FOR SCROFULA.

"Since childhood, I have been afflicted with scrofulous boils and sores, which caused me terrible suffering. Physicians were unable to help me, and I only grew worse under their care. At length, I began to take

AYER'S

Sarsaparilla, and very soon grew better. After using half a dozen bottles I was completely cured, so that I have not had a boil or pimple on any part of my body for the last twelve years. I can cordially recommend Ayer's Sarsaparilla as the very best blood-purifier in existence."—G. T. REINHART, Myersville, Texas.

AYER'S
THE ONLY WORLD'S FAIR
Sarsaparilla
Ayer's Cherry Pectoral cures Coughs and Cold

ORDER OF PUBLICATION

In Vacation Nov. 12, 1895.

State of Missouri, } ss.
County of Adair, }

In the Circuit Court of Adair county, January term, 1896.

William S. Patrick, plaintiff vs. Lewis Valandigham and his unknown heirs defendants.

AT this day comes the plaintiff herein by his attorney, Joseph Park before the undersigned clerk of the circuit court in vacation and files his petition and affidavit alleging among other things, that defendant Lewis Valandigham as he verily believes is dead and if not that he is absent and a non-resident of the state of Missouri, and if dead there are persons interested in the subject matter of this petition who are heirs or devisees of said Lewis Valandigham whose names he cannot insert herein because they are unknown to him.

Whereupon it is ordered by the Clerk aforesaid that said defendants be notified by publication that said plaintiff has commenced a suit against them in this court, by petition the object and general nature of which is to divest all right, title, interest and claim of said Lewis Valandigham and his unknown heirs in and to the following described real estate situated in Adair county and state of Missouri to-wit: The south half of the south east quarter of the south west quarter of section twenty, in township sixty one, range thirteen, E. and vest the title thereto in the plaintiff herein.

And it is further ordered that a copy hereof be published according to law, in the Weekly Graphic, a newspaper published in Adair county and state of Missouri for four successive weeks the last insertion to be at least fifteen days before the fifth day of January 1896.

STATE OF MISSOURI, } ss.
COUNTY OF ADAIR, }

I, Grant Corbin, clerk of the Circuit court of Adair county aforesaid, hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the Original Order of Publication, in the cause therein named as the same appears on my office.

Witness my hand as Clerk and the seal of said court. Done at office in Kirksville this 23rd day of Nov. 1895.

GRANT CORBIN, Clerk.

Notice.

Notice is hereby given that letters of Administration upon the estate of Elizabeth Howk deceased, late of Adair county, Mo., have been granted to the undersigned Frank M. Howk by the Probate court of the county of Adair, bearing date the 8th day of October, 1895. All persons having claims against said estate are required to exhibit them to me, for allowance within one year after the day of said letters or they may be precluded from any benefit of such estate and if such claim be not exhibited within two years from the time of the publication of this notice they will be forever barred.

FRANK M. HOWK.

Notice.

Notice is hereby given that letters of Administration upon the estate of Augustus Lowe, deceased, late of Adair county, Mo., have been granted to the undersigned Easter A. Lowe by the Probate court of the county of Adair, bearing date the 8th day of October, 1895. All persons having claims against said estate are required to exhibit them to me, for allowance within one year after the day of said letters or they may be precluded from any benefit of such estate and if such claim be not exhibited within two years from the time of the publication of this notice they will be forever barred.

EASTER A. LOWE.

TRUSTEE'S SALE

Whereas, Charles E. Darrow by his certain deed of trust dated the 8th day of November, 1891, and recorded in the recorder's office of the county of Adair, Missouri, under and to the order of said trustee deed book V, page 493, conveyed to the undersigned trustee all his right, title, interest, and estate in and to the following described real estate, situated in the county of Adair, state of Missouri, viz:

All of lots one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three, thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty, forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four, forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine, fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two, fifty-three, fifty-four, fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three, sixty-four, sixty-five, sixty-six, sixty-seven, sixty-eight, sixty-nine, seventy, seventy-one, seventy-two, seventy-three, seventy-four, seventy-five, seventy-six, seventy-seven, seventy-eight, seventy-nine, eighty, eighty-one, eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four, eighty-five, eighty-six, eighty-seven, eighty-eight, eighty-nine, ninety, ninety-one, ninety-two, ninety-three, ninety-four, ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred, one hundred and one, one hundred and two, one hundred and three, one hundred and four, one hundred and five, one hundred and six, one hundred and seven, one hundred and eight, one hundred and nine, one hundred and ten, one hundred and eleven, one hundred and twelve, one hundred and thirteen, one hundred and fourteen, one hundred and fifteen, one hundred and sixteen, one hundred and seventeen, one hundred and eighteen, one hundred and nineteen, one hundred and twenty, one hundred and twenty-one, one hundred and twenty-two, one hundred and twenty-three, one hundred and twenty-four, one hundred and twenty-five, one hundred and twenty-six, one hundred and twenty-seven, one hundred